High Steaks

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High Steaks

by HANNIBRAT (moderndaylestat)

Summary

Young medical student Hannibal Lecter has two good things going for him. The first is his part-time job at the hospital morgue, which allows him to maintain his unorthodox diet. The second good thing is the blazing chemistry he has with his new roommate Will Graham. Right now life is good, but it's unsustainable in the long term. Will is bound to figure out sooner or later that Hannibal's home-cooked meals come from rather unconventional sources.

And when it becomes impossible for Hannibal to hide his secret any longer, things turn out not the way he expected.

Notes

Just a little something to get me back into writing after a bit of a break. I've been itching to write an AU where Will and Hannibal are twenty-somethings for a while, so here we go. Might make it into a series later!

And no, there is no spelling mistake in High Steaks, it’s a meat pun (hilarious, i know)

Chapter 1

“How do you have time for all this?” Will huffs as a greeting as he saunters into the small kitchen of their Baltimore apartment.

He unceremoniously throws his bag and service weapon on the kitchen table and slumps into the chair beside it. Hannibal looks up from the stove, his hand never ceasing to stir the pinkish-red meat sizzling on the frying pan.

“Time for what?”

“You go to med school, work crazy long hours at the hospital, and still somehow have time to *cook your meals from scratch*,” Will elaborates, waving his hands around in an amused fashion.

Hannibal can’t deny that his education, part-time job and lifestyle choices indeed keep him busy. Busier than most of his peers, who prefer to spend their early twenties swimming in alcohol and parties.

“I’m very careful about what I put into my body,” he tells Will, topping it off with a dismissive wave of his spatula.

Will’s face grows into a wide, cocky grin. “Not what you said last night.”

The blush that colours Hannibal’s cheeks at the comment is blatantly obvious. Still, he attempts to cover it up by leaning over the stove, so that he can blame it on the hot steam evaporating from the pan. Will would see through it, of course, just like he sees through everything else. Besides, he was the one to initiate last night’s shenanigans anyway, with the way that he paraded into the living room wearing nothing but underwear and plopped himself into Hannibal’s lap.

“Jerk,” Hannibal mumbles under his breath, but he can’t stop a smile from creeping onto his face.

Romantic endeavours have never been the top priority for Hannibal, he simply got lucky to move in with someone he has stellar chemistry with. Will Graham, a recent graduate from the New Orleans Police Academy, finally free from the confines of the Bible Belt, is a man who knows what he wants and isn’t afraid to get it. It’s almost solely due to Will’s boldness that it took them less than a month of living together to get to know each other rather intimately.

Will gets to his feet again and squeezes past Hannibal to take a plate from the cupboard. As he does so, his quick fingers snatch a piece of meat from the pan, dropping it right into his mouth.

“ ‘Mnot complaining though. Your cooking tastes amazing,” Will says while chewing, the words coming out as a barely comprehensible jumble. Hannibal rolls his eyes at the man’s lack of manners. “Maybe it’s ‘cause you don’t get your meat from a supermarket.”

The supposedly offhand comment makes Hannibal's body stiffen all over. He's never mentioned where the meat comes from.

Evidently, Will is observant enough to notice that there is never any empty supermarket-brand meat packaging in the trash. Or maybe his brilliant mind has picked up some other minuscule but nonetheless telling detail about Hannibal's behaviour and cooking habits. Will tends to see things in people that no one else seems to be able to notice, which has led to him being a rising star in the homicide department, cracking cases and catching murderers like it's no big deal. Hannibal forcibly relaxes his coiled up muscles and tries not to worry about it too much. Will has no reason to suspect him of anything, after all.

"My aunt and uncle taught me to always buy directly from a butcher. That way the cuts are fresher, and you can taste the difference."

"Mm-hmm. You sure do love tasting all kinds of meat," Will teases, wiggling his eyebrows at his roommate.

"You're insufferable, Graham."

Will chuckles and reaches into the frying pan to spoon food onto his plate as soon as Hannibal turns off the stove. Awfully bold and impolite, in the classic Will Graham fashion, to assume that Hannibal is fine with sharing his cooking. But then again, he knows that Hannibal always is.

When they first moved in together, two twenty-somethings trying to navigate independent living and their first entry-level jobs, Hannibal didn't think they would be cooking and eating together. His sporadic schedule of round-the-clock shifts at the hospital never lines up with Will's equally unconventional schedule of police work, so coordinating shared meal times would be a nightmare.

It's rare for Hannibal to even have time to cook and enjoy a meal at a leisurely pace. More often than not, he's had to resort to cooking in bulk and saving the portions, so that he could quickly reheat them when his schedule becomes too busy. Hence, their fridge and freezer have always been full of pre-cooked lunches and dinners, neatly packed by Hannibal into fancy glass containers.

About two weeks into sharing an apartment with Will, however, Hannibal realised that the meals were disappearing at a faster rate that he remembered consuming them. After spying on his roommate's movements when Will thought he was home alone, Hannibal ascertained that the young man was most definitely stealing his food, thinking his crimes would go unnoticed.

Hannibal confronted him about it, and eventually an agreement was made that Hannibal would cook for them both if Will washed all dishes afterwards. The arrangement has been working well so far. Will happily eats his roommate's cooking without questioning where the ingredients come from, and Hannibal couldn't be more pleased to have someone to share his unorthodox diet with. Will doesn't *know*, of course. But what he doesn't know can't hurt him.

“How was work?” Hannibal asks once they’ve settled at the table with their plates of delicious-smelling *ragu bolognese*.

“Just the usual shit. Got assigned to a new case though, it seems pretty interesting.”

“How so?”

Will spears another piece of meat onto his fork and transfers it into his mouth. “Have you seen those mutilated corpses on the news, the ones that look like they’ve been torn up by a wild animal? That’s the case they’ve put me on.”

Hannibal has seen the news reports. In the little amount of free time that he has between his study and work commitments, he loves to stay updated on the recent happenings in the criminal world; anything ranging from mysterious disappearances and grotesque murder tableaus to the serial killers currently on the loose. He won’t admit it, but he’s an avid reader of Tattlecrime, too, much to Will’s dismay.

“Any leads so far?” he asks, tilting his head to the side with curiosity.

“The wound patterns don’t match wolves or bears or any other common animals,” Will explains animatedly while continuing to stuff food into his mouth. “It’s as if someone’s built artificial jaws and is going around killing people with them.”

“Fascinating,” Hannibal breathes.

Murders that stand out from the rest in terms of their unconventional methods and execution have always appealed to him. There is something special about the way flesh and bones come apart, the way rivers of blood feel invigorating, and the way death can be used to transform beings rather than end them. It’s like art. Grotesque, brutal and bloody art, but art nonetheless.

“Yeah. What’s left of the bodies is fucking gnarly, but pretty interesting in a way.”

The way Will talks about the carnage he’s investigating sounds like he’s more intrigued than disgusted by it, which Hannibal finds quite pleasing. He couldn’t live with somebody squeamish. Not when he literally eviscerates bodies for a living.

“I mean, not every day you see severed limbs and spilled guts at work,” Will continues.

“Speak for yourself.”

Most people would never even consider getting a job at a morgue, but for Hannibal who needs to support himself financially through medical school and doesn’t mind getting his hands dirty — quite literally — working as a coroner’s assistant isn’t a bad choice. Besides, the part time job of cutting up cadavers comes with certain other perks, such as saving on grocery costs.

“True, almost forgot you willingly surround yourself with blood and guts every day,” Will replies, a hint of amusement in his voice. “Nothing beats a good chat about human innards at the dinner table. Delicious.”

He makes a show of licking his lips, breaking into a laugh straight after.

Hannibal joins in the laughter, but for a rather different reason. His poor roommate has no clue, and Hannibal doesn't plan on enlightening him any time soon. Joking about eating people with a man that has dedicated his life to upholding the law can quickly take a fateful turn for Hannibal, if he doesn't remain careful.

"*Delicious*?" he questions, lightheartedly narrowing his eyes at Will. "You sound like that guy who was killing and cannibalizing young girls. The Minnesota Shrike?"

"Oh yeah. He still haunts me." Will's expression turns somber, shadows settling into the features of his flawlessly-sculpted face. "Some days I wish I never found him out. I wish I hadn't gone to his house and —"

The clanking of Will's cutlery against the empty plate drowns out the rest of his sentence, and he stands up to deposit the dishes into the sink. Hannibal watches, concern written over his face, and just as he opens his mouth to give Will words of reassurance and support, the man continues:

"I wish I wasn't able to see so easily that he was *eating them*. I wish I could stay oblivious to the things people around me do, Hannibal."

Will sighs heavily and his aquamarine eyes seek out Hannibal's. His gaze is burning, piercing, as if he's able to *see* Hannibal. The sensation makes the older man shiver. He wants so desperately to be seen for what he truly is — a troubled soul that has found his own way to cope with past traumas, and crafted his own understanding of what is right and wrong. However, there is no guarantee Will is going to see him that way. No, what Will would see is what the law sees; a deviant, a criminal. There is no way Hannibal can let his secret be found out.

"I'm sorry, Will. I shouldn't have brought him up," he says softly.

It's been over half a year since the Hobbs case was closed, and Will was the immediate catalyst to the killer being discovered and neutralised. It was the first life Will took, spurred into action from the need to protect Hobbs's young daughter. Hannibal is aware of the nightmares of that blood-filled day that are still riddling Will, and he tries his hardest to help the man through them.

With Will stationed at the sink, completing his dishwashing duty for the day, it's easy for Hannibal to drape himself against Will's backside and slide his arms around the shorter man's midriff. From that position, Hannibal can't see Will's face, so he can only hope that judging by the way Will's muscles are relaxing and his heartbeat is slowing to a normal rate, he doesn't suspect Hannibal of anything.

"No, it's fine, don't worry about it. I'm okay," Will promises, tilting his head to the side so his cheek can rest against Hannibal's.

"If you're sure."

Will turns off the tap and dries his hands, wriggling in Hannibal's embrace to turn around so that they're face to face.

"One hundred percent positive," he confirms, his warm breath tickling the sensitive skin of Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal's eyes fall shut of their own accord, his overworked body welcoming the closeness of another. When he reopens them a moment later, Will has already slipped away and made his way to the fridge to pull out one of the many cans stacked on the bottom shelf.

"Want a beer?"

The subpar beer that Will bulk-buys isn't Hannibal's preferred type of alcohol, but right now, after a long day of classes, the golden-ochre liquid with a sweet carbonated smell looks almost too tempting to resist.

"I've got to leave for a night shift in an hour," he groans reluctantly.

"Call in sick and stay home," Will suggests, brushing past Hannibal into the living room.

He is free to lounge on the couch and watch TV for the rest of the night, and Hannibal can't help but feel a small spark of jealousy in his chest.

"What good would that do me?" he asks, rhetorically more than anything.

Will pokes his head through the slightly ajar door to the adjacent room. "You'll find out," he promises, accompanied by a suggestive smile.

Hannibal sighs and shakes his head. He isn't one to skip work unless he is actually too sick to stand on his feet. Besides, the fridge needs restocking.

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It's beautiful, and Hannibal can't resist.

A healthy, spotless set of lungs belonging to a recently-deceased young woman, which is about to now go to waste since she hasn't signed up to donate her organs to a better cause. All the better for Hannibal. As usual, he volunteers to stay back and clean up, which means the only other medical examiner on shift happily heads home. Hannibal really, *really* can't resist, and soon the precious organ is sitting in his little portable cooler bag, ready to be used for what it's worth.

Hannibal knows he can never be too cautious with his culinary choices, especially when he's living with a cop. Because of that, he never brings home any organs or parts that are very clearly human. The body parts he harvests at the morgue are always pieces of flesh that look

similar to pork or beef cuts, just the kind one could buy from the supermarket. He isn't one to take unnecessary risks.

Except for today.

The situation is shaping up to be ideal, because by the time Hannibal finishes his night shift and comes home, Will has already gone to work for the day. He mentioned that he won't be returning until late afternoon, so Hannibal has ample time to chop the lungs up into inconspicuous-looking pieces, and even set them to marinate for an hour or two before cooking.

He puts on his favourite album of classical music, fully set on enjoying his time alone with his hobbies. The magnificent string orchestra drowns out the sounds of the knife hitting the cutting board, and Hannibal loses himself to the music, humming along. The only thing that alerts him to the fact that he isn't alone is the faintest waft of Will's cologne passing in the air. But by that point, it's too late.

"Is that a *lung*?" comes Will's perplexed exclamation from behind him.

Hannibal spins around, startled, almost dropping the knife on the floor. Will eyes him evaluatively and then lowers his gaze back to the organ on the cutting board. There is no point in Hannibal denying that the pale red mass on the countertop is exactly what Will said it is.

"Yes," Hannibal responds, managing to keep his voice neutral and even.

He is good at many things, and fortunately, lying is one of them. Hannibal casually turns back to the counter and resumes the chopping. Will shifts his weight, eyes trained on his roommate's face.

"Looks like it's from a human."

"It's pig," Hannibal deadpans, without missing a beat.

Before Will has the chance to question it further, Hannibal rushes to distract him by launching into a detailed explanation of how the porous texture of the lungs makes them a great offal meat for deep frying, and that the *paru goreng* he is making has been a staple dish in Indonesian cuisine for centuries.

"Sure, okay," Will responds with a noncommittal shrug. "You cook some weird shit but at least it tastes good."

With that, he heads into his room and leaves Hannibal be. Based on his relaxed demeanour, there is nothing to suggest that he is seriously suspecting that his roommate is a cannibal. Relieved and pleased that a potential threat has been avoided, Hannibal goes back to cooking. Will must have been let off work early, which is something Hannibal failed to foresee and prepare for. He berates himself for being so careless and not taking any precautions against situations like this. He should be smarter next time, as chances are he won't be so lucky the second time around.

Over the course of the evening, Hannibal's anxiety about the narrowly-avoided disaster eventually eases, aided by a glass of wine and Will's awfully contagious good mood. It comes as no surprise to either party that soon they end up taking things into Will's room, getting entangled into a heated mess of lust, sweat and bedsheets.

Relaxed by the post-coital bliss, the curly-haired young man falls asleep, sprawled across the mattress. Hannibal watches him snore lightly for a little while, before tiptoeing out of bed to get a glass of water. Will's room looks like it has barely survived an earthquake, with clothes and other belongings haphazardly scattered all over the floor. Hannibal has to feel his way around the cluttered dark room, careful not to bump anything and wake his roommate.

As he makes his way to the door, he accidentally nudges the laptop sitting on Will's desk, and the screen immediately comes alive. Hannibal's eyes are instinctively drawn to it, and as they focus on the image on the screen, he suddenly feels drenched in cold sweat and enveloped in grappling fear.

The web page Will was last looking at lays out the differences between a human and a pig lung. With the accompanying pictures and diagrams being so clear, there is no way Will could still be oblivious to what it is that Hannibal's been cooking.

Hannibal's heart skips a beat, then another.

His secret is out.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Hannibal waits patiently for the dishes to be placed on the table. The meal looks appetising, and Hannibal is eager to find out whether Will's cooking tastes as good as it looks. He wastes no more time cutting off a piece of meat and sliding it into his mouth.

The taste of it almost makes him drop his fork.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal jolts into motion, like a tightly-coiled spring that's suddenly been released.

Will is still asleep, so not everything is lost. Hannibal gets his hands on Will's laptop and opens the browser history. He doesn't delete the entirety of it, just the webpage showing the differences between a pig lung and a human lung. Then, he grabs several beers from the kitchen, pours the contents out, and sets the empty cans near the four cans Will had downed over the course of the night. Once the stage has been set, Hannibal pauses to catch his breath.

When Will awakens and asks about the lungs, the evidence around him will paint a picture that will wipe out all his concerns; he simply had too much to drink, way more than he thought he drank, and the bizarre notion that his roommate is a cannibal will turn out to be nothing but a silly dream.

Hannibal allows himself to relax, feeling relatively confident that his deception plan will work, and crawls back into Will's bed. Sleep doesn't come easily at first, but after an hour or so of snuggling into the curly-haired man's warm body, Hannibal feels himself finally drifting off.

In the morning, Will doesn't bring up the lungs, nor does he seem bothered or suspicious in any other way. He acts like his usual mildly-annoying-yet-still somehow-endearing self; leaving his worn underwear and socks on the floor in front of the bathroom and using an infuriatingly generous amount of Hannibal's expensive body wash. Hannibal doesn't mind too much. The only thing that matters is that due to his clever manipulations, his secret seems to be safe, for now. He makes enough coffee for them both, as always, and buries his face into a textbook to study for his upcoming exam.

"Do we have any more of that lung stuff left?" Will asks, sauntering into the kitchen wearing nothing but a towel around his hips.

He has another towel in his hands, *Hannibal's* towel, which he's using to dry his hair. Hannibal sighs and notes that thankfully, he wasn't planning on showering any time soon.

"Yeah, in the fridge," he replies, eyes still on the book.

Will's almost nude form is distracting at best and outright impossible to resist at worst, and for that reason, Hannibal pointedly refuses to give his roommate even the smallest glance. He needs to focus on his grades.

"I'm working a double shift today so I'm gonna need to bring something to eat," Will hums, pouring his share of the coffee into a mug. "Mind if I take some?"

Hannibal freezes.

He isn't stupid, and Will's request isn't as innocent as it seems. The police station that Will works at is attached to a forensic laboratory, the place where one could take a suspicious food sample for analysis to determine where the meat came from. Besides, Will is rarely organised enough to bring lunches to work, so the fact that he seems to be planning ahead this time is suspicious, to say the least.

Hannibal needs to think fast.

"Sure, take it," he says, voice as nonchalant as possible. "When do you have to leave?"

"15 minutes."

Excellent, Hannibal thinks, a plan quickly forming in his head. Perhaps, letting his eyes roam over Will's flawlessly-sculpted body is going to be beneficial in the long run, after all. He closes his book and stands up with the conviction of a man that knows what he wants.

"Just enough time." His voice is suave and smooth just like his movements, as he slides up to Will and runs a hand slowly down the exposed chest.

And Will, who isn't stupid either, knows exactly what those movements mean.

"No, I can't be late," he groans apologetically.

Yet, his hands that have found their way to Hannibal's lower back tell a different story. Hannibal's lips mouth at his jaw, then at his neck, swallowing the remaining drops of water still glistening on the pale skin.

"We need to be quick, then," he smirks.

Something akin to a lustful *'fuck'* escapes from Will's mouth as he finds himself pressed against their kitchen wall, Hannibal's quick fingers unwrapping the towel and unceremoniously dropping it on the floor. The older man doesn't waste time lowering himself onto his knees, gracefully and seductively in equal measure. He wraps a hand around Will's cock and slides the tip between his lips, determined to achieve his goal in the short amount of time that they have.

There is a sound of ceramic hitting the countertop as Will knocks over his coffee mug while frantically trying to grab something for purchase. Hannibal is only vaguely aware of the mess that's been made, his mind solely focused on the most important task at hand. He remembers that this is precisely why morning blowjobs haven't become a routine in their household — there is never enough time to enjoy things properly. Despite that, though, Hannibal delights in the act, savouring the way his ministrations are drawing heavy breaths and moans from Will, and the way the man's thighs twitch with pleasure.

Hannibal moves his fist and mouth with increasing pace. Harder, faster, tighter. He doesn't stop until he feels the telltale sign of Will's hips stuttering and stopping, and then the younger man's release floods his tongue.

"Fuck, Hannibal..." Will whines, high-pitched and ragged, as he catches his breath.

His muscles feel lax and pliant under Hannibal's touch, relaxed to the bone. Then, they immediately tighten again when Will looks at the clock.

"Shit, I gotta go… But you haven't —," Will stammers, eyes on the obvious tenting in Hannibal's pants. "I should…"

The conflict is written all over the poor man's features, faced with the dilemma of whether to return Hannibal's favour, or be at work on time.

"Don't worry about it, just go." Hannibal rushes him along, grabbing Will's bag, wallet and keys, while the other man haphazardly gets dressed.

"But —"

"You owe me one, yes," Hannibal assures him with a smug half-smile. "I'll add it to the growing list of things you need to pay me back for. Now, go."

Will nods hurriedly, takes his belongings from Hannibal's outstretched hands and runs out the door. The leftover lung meal remains safely in the fridge, forgotten. Just like Hannibal planned.

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"Will. You knew I had the day off. I could've picked you up."

You're not in a state to drive is what goes unsaid.

Worry is evident in the way Hannibal moves around the kitchen, straightening the already perfectly straight rows of spices and condiments on the shelves. He needs to channel his nervous energy into something physical, give his hands something to do. It's the only way he can trick himself into feeling like things are under his control, when the reality is far from it.

“I’m fine, Hannibal. Honestly,” Will reassures him, eyes bright and genuine.

And Hannibal would almost believe it, if it weren’t for the fact that when he discovered that Will came home from work several hours early and in a dishevelled state, the whiskey bottle that had previously been full was now missing a quarter. Will’s usual go-to drink to unwind after a normal day is beer, whereas going for something stronger is always a clear giveaway that things aren’t quite right.

Hannibal purses his lips. “You were *attacked*.”

“Perks of the job,” Will sighs with a cynical wince. “It’s okay though, the guy’s dead now. I’m fine.”

Several sizable bruises and an injured hand hardly counts as "fine" in Hannibal's opinion, but he doesn't argue.

“Still, you should have called me,” he says, mild displeasure seeping through his voice.

There is a shade of apology to Will’s bluish-green eyes. He knows Hannibal worries a lot about his safety, which is often put at risk due to the dangerous nature of his job.

“Sorry. I will next time,” Will murmurs and leans forward so that their foreheads rest against each other.

Hannibal can’t find it in himself to be angry or disappointed, of course not. Will single-handedly brought down yet another unhinged serial murderer. He had been investigating the property of Randall Tier, the man suspected of being the killer that mauled people with artificial jaws, when Tier unexpectedly attacked Will. It was a fight to the death, and Will emerged victorious after snapping the man’s neck with his bare hands.

Hannibal would have *killed* for an opportunity to witness Will’s blood-stained and savage glory with his own eyes.

He can still smell the sweet metallic scent of Will’s blood that’s crusted on his scraped hands, as well as the intoxicating fragrance of adrenaline and euphoria in Will’s sweat. The bouquet of wonderful aromas, together with Will’s wild eyes and disarrayed appearance, paint a magnificent picture in Hannibal’s mind. His darling Will, his viciously lethal Will, has never looked more invigorated and beautiful, more *alive* .

And Hannibal wants to do nothing more than to nurture this fascinating side of him, to feed the darkness that lives underneath Will’s skin.

As if on cue, Will holds out his wounded hand, allowing Hannibal to take care of the injuries. And Hannibal does, with the expertise of a doctor and gentleness of a lover. He cleans, disinfects and covers Will’s hand in soft gauze. Once he’s done, he presses a kiss on top of the bandages, and then on top of Will’s lips.

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The near-death experience had Will quite shaken, but with the combined effects of the whiskey and Hannibal's attentive care eventually manage to relax him. He offers to cook them dinner so that Hannibal can go back to studying for his exam. Hannibal is mildly surprised by the initiative, since Will has never before expressed a liking for culinary pursuits. He happily accepts the offer though, curious to see what his roommate's cooking will be like.

The preparation of the meal takes at least two hours, which suggests that Will is putting in his best efforts. Hannibal finishes writing up his notes and only enters the kitchen once he can hear Will pulling out plates and cutlery from the draws.

"Smells delicious," he comments, watching Will carefully arrange the food on the plates. It looks like a steak of some sort, garnished with steamed vegetables and a sauce made from scratch. "Thanks for offering to cook."

A little mischievous smile tugs on the corners of Will's mouth. "It was my turn to provide the meat."

Hannibal waits patiently for the dishes to be placed on the table and for Will to take the first bite. Impeccable table etiquette is important, even if it's just a casual dinner between roommates. The meal looks appetising, and Hannibal is eager to find out whether Will's cooking tastes as good as it looks. He wastes no more time cutting off a piece of meat and sliding it into his mouth.

The taste of it almost makes him drop his fork.

It's unmistakable. The unique blend of texture and flavour that defines a *very specific type of meat*.

Hannibal chews, swallows and lowers his hand holding the fork in a daze, his body operating on autopilot. Meanwhile, his brain spirals into overdrive. There is absolutely no way his taste buds could be mistaken. But there is absolutely no way Will could be serving him *this* , either.

"Do you like it?" Will asks, voice too casual to be *truly casual*.

Hannibal clamps his jaw shut because his heart is racing so hard that he feels it's going to jump out through his mouth. He forces his lips to form into a small smile. Will's eyes are burrowing into him, sharp and attentive, so Hannibal has to brace himself and meet them. Avoiding eye contact would be way too suspicious.

"It's sublime, Will."

Will nods, satisfied. It's evident from his features that he didn't expect any other answer than this.

"Good. I tried my best to cater to your unique tastes."

Will's tone is light and non-threatening, genuine even, but Hannibal still feels cold sweat forming along his spine. The man works for the police of all things, and holding people accountable for their crimes is the backbone of his existence. Will is the personification of justice and the law, which means his roommate with cannibalistic tendencies isn't safe from repercussions, regardless of how tightly they're bound together by friendship, sex, or whatever else may be going on between them.

Hannibal won't admit to anything. If Will decides to throw away what they have in favour of getting him arrested, Hannibal isn't going to make it easy for him. His fingers flex nervously under the table, curling into fists and stretching back out. In an attempt to stay calm, Hannibal reminds himself that Will hasn't made any concrete accusations. And even if he accuses Hannibal of anything, he still won't have tangible proof.

"It seems you know exactly what I like to eat," he points out carefully.

"*Who* you like to eat," Will corrects.

And there it is. The truth is no longer vague and hiding in the depths of their minds; it's been caught and laid out into the space between them, clear as day.

Hannibal can't deny it any longer, can't claim obliviousness or confusion. Will knowingly brought and cooked the meat, and Hannibal ate it and recognised it as being human. So, he stays silent. Never in his twenty-four years of life did he think that "anything you say can be held against you" could apply to the dinner table, but here they are.

Will spears another piece of meat onto his fork and transfers it to his mouth, eyes never leaving Hannibal's.

"The guy from earlier today, no one's going to notice that he's missing some flesh from his leg. I made sure of it," he explains.

Hannibal takes his time to process the information. They're eating Randall Tier, which explains why Will was profoundly agitated earlier in the day. It was his first act of knowingly sourcing and eating human meat.

Although Will's actions bring warmth to Hannibal's chest, the tension still doesn't leave his body. There are several reasons for Will to do this, and the simple gesture of appealing to Hannibal's tastes seems like the least probable one.

"How did you know?" he asks. Clearly, he had underestimated Will.

When Will chuckles, there isn't a single note of malice. "You're not as slick as you think you are, Hannibal."

"Most would say it's a controversial lifestyle choice. I didn't know how you would react."

"So you tried to keep me in the dark. Deleting my browser history, really Hannibal?" Will's tone is incredulous and he rolls his eyes. "I had it figured out *way* before that."

If Will had known for a while but kept Hannibal's secret all this time, then perhaps, he intends to keep it in the future, too. Hannibal rolls his shoulders in hopes of clearing out the fear that's been having a strong hold of his muscles the past few minutes. To his surprise, the stress recedes easier than he'd anticipated.

"You knew… but you didn't do anything about it," Hannibal concludes. Careful, like walking on ice. Yet still optimistic that the ice won't betray him.

"What could I have done? Accused you of eating people? You would've denied it and called me crazy."

Hannibal shrugs in noncommittal agreement; it's exactly what he would've done.

Will eats another mouthful, unperturbed. "I couldn't talk to you about it," he explains. "So I had to *show* you."

Hannibal nods, understanding. He'd been so secretive about his unorthodox dietary preferences that he didn't leave any room for Will to become part of it. It hadn't even occurred to him that Will might want to share his lifestyle.

"So, you're not going to turn me in?"

Although Hannibal already knows the answer, he has to confirm, has to hear Will say it.

"Of course not, idiot." Will's affectionate tone sweeps away the last hints of wariness in Hannibal's mind. "I don't care that it's people. It tastes good, so why the fuck not?"

Hannibal can't help but smile as he places a piece of steak between his teeth. The soft meat melts on his tongue, filling his mouth with its delectable flavour. It tastes like an offering. Will's offering to him. A display of loyalty and alliance.

Knowing that Will wants to share this lifestyle with him is like the perfect condiment; it'll make every meal taste even sweeter than before.

Bon appetit.

Chapter End Notes

I have more ideas in mind for young Hannibal and Will's adventures, so I might make this into a series and write a sequel (or two). Stay tuned!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!